

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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**DAVIS, SHUSTER JOINT STATEMENT
RESPONDING TO CHERTOFF'S PREPARED
SENATE TESTIMONY**

Washington, D.C. – Government Reform Chairman Tom Davis and Emergency Management Subcommittee Chairman Bill Shuster released the following statement in response to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff's prepared testimony for tomorrow's Senate Homeland Security Committee hearing on National Emergency Management.

"Our country's national emergency management system is in need of comprehensive reform, and rightly so Congress – in both chambers – has taken deliberate action to investigate the problems, dig for answers and implement effective solutions."

"The mistakes at the federal, state and local level during the response to and preparation for Hurricane Katrina cannot be dismissed as a lack of detailed planning and uncooperative behavior by 'a few people,' which is suggested by Secretary Chertoff. Such a one-dimensional statement not only discounts the fundamental failings at the federal level, but it ignores the overwhelming evidence unearthed by the House Select Katrina Committee, the Senate Homeland Security Committee and the White House, all of which discovered systemic, broad and cultural flaws at all levels. That implication is a dangerously myopic view of recent history and a disingenuous understatement of the problems that need to be fixed. It's revisionist. To say Katrina's lessons learned merely point to a minor personnel problem is like attributing the Black Plague to a few rats. The real root causes, and solutions, go much deeper, and restoring FEMA's independence is the first step in comprehensive reform that also must

include rebuilding, strengthening, re-establishing direct communications with the White House, and more.”

“Unlike FEMA, the Coast Guard has a terrorism prevention mission and DHS increased the Coast Guard’s budget, staffing and responsibilities accordingly. In creating DHS, Congress fenced off the Coast Guard from the mischief that hobbled FEMA. The fence shielded the Coast Guard from the bureaucratic deterioration DHS caused. Is fencing off agencies within DHS really the best solution or is it an ineffective compromise short of complete removal for namesake and jurisdiction?”

“On the theory that all essential elements of the national response must be within DHS to function, half of Health and Human Services and large chunks of the Defense Department should be moved into DHS as well. Some functions are inherently vulnerable to bureaucratic exsanguination and can only thrive autonomously. Like national defense or the administration of justice, national emergency response is a necessarily free-standing function. We learned the hard way that the alleged benefits of synergy are far outweighed by the costs and inefficiencies of a FEMA buried within DHS.”

Davis and Shuster, along with Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Don Young are the lead sponsors to the Restoring Emergency Services to Protect Our Nation from Disasters (RESPOND) Act, which rebuilds the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), strengthens FEMA, provides FEMA’s director with a direct line of communication to the White House, and restores FEMA as a stand-alone agency so it does not deteriorate again.

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